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SOCIETIES

SECTION OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

THE Section met at Princeton, on February 26, 1906, in conjunction with the New York Branch of the American Psychological Association. Professor MacDougall occupied the chair. The following are abstracts of the papers read:

Method in Esthetics: A. L. JONES.

A discussion of the relative value of the empirical and the metaphysical methods.

A Psychological Theory of the Origin of Religion: IRVING KING.

Psychologically, religion can not be considered as the outgrowth of a special instinct or perception. It is rather a construct in various individuals, appearing in successive generations through the agency of certain stimulating social situations which are perpetuated by social heredity. The religious consciousness may be called an attitude which has been built up with reference to certain types of objective conditions. It is most nearly related to the valuational attitudes, of which it may be said to be a specialization. The particular aim of this paper was to show how the origin of the sense of value could be traced in primitive life and how the religious consciousness could be shown to be differentiated therefrom. It was held that the problem was chiefly one of determining the influences which would tend to deepen and render permanent the value of consciousness. It was pointed out that the tribe or social group furnishes all the conditions needful for the transformation of simple fleeting values into permanent religious ones.

The Detection of Color Blindness: VIVIAN A. C. HENMON.

This paper will be published in full in a later issue of this JOURNAL.

Color Sensations and Color Names: R. S. WOODWORTH.

The results of Woodworth and Bruner tend to the conclusion that the color sense is essentially the same in widely different branches of the human species, and in particular that the more primitive races show no special deficiency in the perception of blue. The contrary conclusion of Rivers, based on his tests of different races, is susceptible of some adverse criticism. The absence of a name for blue in many languages, and its late development in all, are to be explained on psychological rather than physiological principles. The fundamental principle involved is that of the objective reference of sensations. Color is conceived and named not as a quality of sensation, but as a quality of objects. Moreover, it is not a directly practical quality of objects, but owes its importance to its power of serving as a ready sign of more practical inner qualities and conditions of objects. The tendency is to name the inner and practically important quality rather than the sign; thus, we speak of well-done and under-done meat rather than of brown and red meat, and of clear and cloudy skies rather than of blue and gray skies. A further principle that must be borne in mind is the 'law of dissociation by varying concomitants.' Unless a color appears in a variety of objects it is not likely to receive an abstract name. In primitive conditions of life, red and yellow, being the colors and distinguishing marks of animals and animal substances, as well as of ripe fruits, appear in sufficiently varied and important situations to account for their having received names early. Green is principally important as a sign of growing vegetation, and need, therefore, have no name except that which distinguishes the growing from the dead or dried condition. Blue is principally important as a sign of the weather, and is, therefore, represented by a weather name rather than by a color name. The development of an abstract name for blue seems to have resulted from the multiplication of blue objects, dependent on the introduction of blue pigments.

The Practise Curve as an Educational Method: J. McKEEN CATTELL.

Curves were shown giving the records of two children copying at maximum speed the same passage and a new passage on the typewriter for 365 consecutive days, and for memorizing ten German words and the English equivalents for 140 days. Experiments were made once a month to measure the transference of practise to other functions, and the curves were shown. It was argued that the practise curve has certain advantages as an educational method. The child plots his curve and becomes interested in his progress, viewing his performance in an objective fashion; he works with maximum effort and attention for a short time; his main competition is with himself as he seeks to surpass his record. The experiment can be so arranged that all the work of the child centers about it—the three *R's* and the rest—supplying a unity and an interest that are often lacking in our schools.

A New View of 'Mental Function': HOWARD C. WARREN.

From the genetic standpoint the biological functions may be classed as specific or general. The latter include nutrition, reproduction and defense, which occur in various forms throughout all species. The distinction suggests a similar division of the functions of consciousness. The problem of the paper was to distinguish the fundamental or general mental processes from the complex. Psychologists lay too much stress on the human senses, which are only particular evolutionary products and furnish merely the natural-history material of the science. Even the division into cognitive, affective and conative is unsatisfactory, since these processes are combinations of more fundamental ones. The discussion led to the formulation on genetic and analytic grounds of five fundamental functions, *viz.*, sensibility, intensity modification, quality differentiation, association and discrimination, as the simple processes which the data furnished by sensory and central stimulation undergo. The reader examined the character of these and showed their lack of adequate physical analogy. He analyzed the part they play in attention, perception (association of differentiated elements), imagination, conception, judgment, reasoning, appreciation, self-consciousness, etc. From the standpoint of these functions, the relation between genetic and analytic psychology appears in a new light, as does also the distinction between mental functions and elements. The study of physiology, though important for psychology, is involved in it only as physics and chemistry are involved in physiology. The recognition of such fundamental functions affords the only satisfactory starting-point for an independent science of psychology.

The 'Four Powers': D. S. MILLER.

Arnold tells us that human nature in its civilized completeness requires the development of four powers: the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of social life and manners, the power of beauty. This involves (what Arnold hardly acknowledges) the independence of beauty as a form of well-being, an end-in-itself. And to the list, on a fair survey of human life, we must add the power of the affections, the power of religion, the power of bodily life and the senses. Finally, it has to be noted that conduct in its full sense includes all; it compasses human life and assigns a place to each of the powers, from morals, in the narrower sense, to beauty.

The Nature of Judgment: W. H. SHELDON.

The linguistic expression of judgments, in so far as it is uniform throughout all languages, can be used as a guide in detecting the essential features of the process of judgment.

Reality as Possible Experience: M. PHILLIPS MASON.

The concept of reality as possible experience, developed in Royce's 'The World and the Individual,' is not, as Royce would have us believe, the same in spirit as it is in Kant. For Kant the interest lies in the possible, the fundamental conditions of experience, while for Royce the emphasis is laid rather on experience itself; and for that reason he makes a distinction between actual and possible experience, between experience which is actually experienced by human beings and that which is not experienced by any human being, but which might be if conditions were other than they are. Since Royce finds possible experience, taken in this sense, equivalent to no experience so far as human beings are concerned, it seems to him necessary to assume an absolute experience to include the purely possible experience, thus setting aside possible experience as an inadequate concept of reality. Had he taken the concept in the Kantian sense it would not have been necessary for him to develop a concept of the absolute. For possible experience as a system of the conditions of experience is a sufficient solution of the problem of experience. A higher unity of what these conditions involve with experience is unnecessary and based on a mistaken motive. The only reason there is for developing a concept of reality is to unify experience, and such a unity we have in the fundamental conditions of experience, the world of possible experience.

Misconceptions of Realism: W. P. MONTAGUE.

Realism is the theory that *esse* is not *percipi,* that objects do not depend for their existence on being experienced, and that, as a consequence, they can exist continuously through those intervals when no one is aware of them. This view is often falsely interpreted to mean (1) that consciousness can not change or in any way affect objects; (2) that real objects are transcendent things-in-themselves, lacking all experienced qualities; (3) that real objects can only be inferred and not perceived. In answer to the first of these supposed implications, which would commit realism to the doctrine of the epiphenomenality of consciousness, it is sufficient to point out that one thing can, so far as its existence is concerned, be independent of another thing or of its relations to that thing and can yet be affected by it. Knowledge of an object at one moment can enable the knower to change it at a later moment without prejudice to its continued existence during the intervals when it is not known. As regards the second implication, it may easily be seen that the quality of a thing has no necessary connection with the fact that it is perceived, except on the idealist's assumption that consciousness confers qualities as well as existence upon its objects, which is just what realism denies. As to the third misconception of realism, it is somewhat more excusable than the others because the majority of philosophical realists have been tempted by the supposed exigencies of the physiological theory of sense-perception to adopt an epistemological dualism or representative theory of knowledge. Realism is not, however, bound up with dualism and might without the slightest inconvenience defend the common-sense view that perceptual consciousness extends to and reveals real objects outside the organism and is not confined to the comprehension of internal copies or ideas of these.

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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

The Afferent Nervous System from a New Aspect. HENRY HEAD, W. H. R. RIVERS and JAMES SHERREN. *Brain,* 1905, XXVIII. Pp. 99–115.

The Consequences of Injury to the Peripheral Nerves in Man. HENRY HEAD and JAMES SHERREN. *Ibid.* Pp. 116–338.

These two articles are important to psychologists and should be read by all who are interested in the analysis of pressure and skin sensations. The material upon which the articles are based is a series of cases in which there was injury or division of some of the peripheral sensory nerves.

A sample observation which led to the research is as follows: "When the median nerve is divided, sensation is entirely lost over a considerable part of both index and middle fingers. Over the palm, within the area said by anatomists to be supplied by this nerve, sensation is usually diminished and not completely abolished. In a similar manner, division of the ulnar nerve produces complete insensibility of the little finger and of a variable portion of the ulnar aspect of the palm; but partial loss of sensation is found over a large area of the palm and the ulnar half of the ring finger. Such is the usual statement of surgeons and anatomists" (p. 100).

This statement of the results of injury led the authors to put to themselves two questions: 'What is meant by diminished sensibility?' and 'To what is it due?' Accounts of conditions in various forms of nerve lesions are given which indicate the answers to these questions. The diminished sensibility was found to be a true loss of certain sensations and the retention of others. Thus from careful study of the cases the authors have been able to differentiate some sensory elements which in normal people are with difficulty or not at all discriminated.

The experimental results are given from about eighty cases of injuries to the peripheral nerves, particularly to those of the hand and arm. Forty-six text figures illustrate the result, and there are eight excellent tables. The first article gives a general theoretical consideration of the results of all the work, and the second article is an account of the observations